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AGRICULTURAL POPULATION AND PRODUCTION

121 THE course of Rumanian politics between the wars can be understood only in its economic setting; urgent economic problems constantly demanded the attention of all governments, and at the same time the prevailing poverty and economic backwardness undermined political life and contributed powerfully to the emergence of the dictatorships. This and the following chapter sketch the general features of the economic framework, with particular emphasis upon agriculture and the demographic problem. Industry, commerce, and finance are considered primarily in their relation to the agrarian question.

*Population*¹

161 According to the 1930 census, Rumania had a population of 162 18,057,028 persons, the largest of any state in eastern Europe with the exception of Poland. While the density, 61 persons per square kilometer in 1930, was less than that of the more highly industrialized states of western Europe, the population was increasing at a rapid rate. Rumania had one of the highest birth rates in non-Russian Europe as well as the highest death rate. In general, its population pattern resembled that of the other states of eastern Europe, especially Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Ukraine, and was in marked contrast to the stable or declining populations of the West.

163 Eastern Europe is now passing through the phase of great population growth which began in England and western Europe in the eighteenth century and has since radiated eastward. This phenomenon, one of the most important in European history, appears to have followed a definite sequence: first, a high death rate and a high birth rate, more or less in balance, giving a stable or only slightly expanding population; then the death rate dropped rapidly; finally the birth rate dropped down to or below the death rate. The lag between the fall in the death rate and the subsequent fall in the birth rate produced the great expansion of population. From current evidence

1. More complete statistical information on the population is given in the Appendix.

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it appears that in eastern Europe the birth rate has begun to decline, ¹⁶³ but its effect will not be reflected in the population for a number of ¹⁶⁵ years. ●

The decline of the death rate in the West resulted from the numerous social, hygienic, and nutritional improvements gradually introduced and disseminated over the last two centuries, all of which were slow in reaching eastern Europe. The subsequent fall in the Western birth rate appears to have been largely a conscious social restriction and not any decline in "national virility."² It generally accompanies a rise in living conditions and has shown a direct correlation with class differences.

The extent to which those factors bringing about the growth of population in the West apply to eastern Europe is not known with certainty. The fall in the eastern European death rate after the middle of the nineteenth century appears to have corresponded with the introduction of some of the social and hygienic improvements from the West, but it may also have resulted from a moderate improvement in internal and external security at a somewhat earlier date.³

Birth and death rates for Greater Rumania showed a decline during the interwar years, largely a result of drops in the rural rates. The rural birth rate in 1936, however, was still well above that of the towns (33.8 per thousand as against 21.4). The rate of natural increase, the excess of births over deaths, also displayed a perceptible decline, from over 14 per thousand inhabitants in the early 1920's to about 11 in the late 1930's. The birth rate fell greatly during the Second World War (to a low of 19.9 in 1945) and seems to have increased only slightly in the postwar years. The death rate having remained approximately the same, the rate of growth of Rumania's population has diminished tremendously under the exceptional conditions of the past decade.

Agricultural Overpopulation

While Rumania's over-all density of population is not very high ¹⁶¹ as compared with that of western Europe, most of the people live on the land, and the agricultural population is quite dense. In 1941 the agricultural population of Rumania (minus Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina, Northern Transylvania, and Southern Dobrogea) represented 71.4 per cent of the total population and 94.4 per cent of the

2. Dudley Kirk, *Europe's Population in the Interwar Years* (League of Nations, 1946), p. 38.

3. A. M. Carr-Saunders, *World Population: Past Growth and Present Trends* (Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 80.

434 terials and wooden floors, and it is quite possible that there were other improvements in village conditions which would not appear in statistics.

The depression greatly reduced the Rumanian income, and by 1937 the per capita real income had not yet regained the 1927 level.

• [165] In the chapter on population it was seen that Rumania had an extremely high death rate. This was matched by an extraordinarily high infant mortality rate, the highest in Europe. Between 1931 and 1938 infant deaths showed no sign of declining, but ranged between a maximum of 19.2 per 100 living births in 1935 and a minimum of 17.4 in 1938.

511 The low standard of living implicit in the vital statistics is also reflected in the dietary deficiencies of the Rumanian peasant. A number of surveys taken in the 1930's reached the same general conclusions: ²⁶ while the caloric content of the diet was usually adequate, its quality was very poor; an excessive consumption of grains, especially maize in the form of corn meal (*mămăligă*) and not enough animal products or protective foods. Seasonal consumption, as might be expected, varied widely. The prevalence of pellagra has been an obvious indication of an unbalanced diet.

511 Statistics on housing, disease, medical service, education, and illiteracy confirm the impression that the Rumanian peasant had one of the lowest standards of living in Europe. Admittedly, the statistically average Rumanian is an abstraction. Peasants with holdings over 5 hectares lived better and were healthier than peasants on dwarf holdings. The husbandman with an intensively cultivated farm in Țara Bârsei in Transylvania had about three times the income of the small holder in Dobrogea. Nevertheless, the flat picture of widespread poverty and squalor presented by the statistics is not far from the truth. The colorful costumes and picturesque folk dances of the Rumanian peasantry should not obscure the fact that in 1930 nearly half the population was illiterate and in 1938 one child in five died before it was a year old.

Accompanying this peasant poverty was a marked inequality in the distribution of the total income. Rumanian statistics do not permit an exact estimate of its extent, but it was perfectly obvious to anyone who visited Bucarest. The unmistakable signs of luxury spending

[113] 26. D. C. Georgescu, *L'Alimentation de la population rurale en Roumanie* (Bucarest, 1940); W. Aykroyd, I. Alexa, I. Nitulescu, "Étude de l'alimentation des paysans dans la région à pellagre de Moldavie," *Archives roumaines de pathologie expérimentale et de microbiologie* (Paris, 1935); Ioan Claudiu, *Alimentația poporului român* (Bucarest, 1939).

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TABLE III. REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS IN RUMANIA 162

	Area (1,000 km. ²)	Popula- tion (1,000's)	Density (per km. ²)	Vital Rates, 1930			Reproduction Rates	
				Birth	Death	Increase	Gross	Net
RUMANIA	295.0	18,057	61	34.2	20.1	14.1	2.16	1.40
Oltenia	24.1	1,513	63	33.7	20.4	13.3	2.11	1.37
Muntenia	52.5	4,029	77	35.4	20.1	15.3	2.22	1.44
Dobrogea	23.3	815	35	39.2	23.7	15.5	2.70	1.75
Moldavia	38.0	2,434	64	39.9	21.4	18.5	2.48	1.61
Bessarabia	44.4	2,864	64	38.3	20.8	17.5	2.57	1.67
Bucovina	10.4	853	82	31.3	19.0	12.3	1.88	1.22
Transylvania	62.2	3,218	52	30.1	18.5	11.6	2.01	1.30
Banat	18.7	940	50	21.3	18.7	2.6	1.25	.81
Crişana and Maramureş	21.3	1,390	65	28.8	19.1	9.7	1.77	1.15

SOURCE: *Ibid.*

TABLE IV. VITAL RATES IN RUMANIA

A. The Old Kingdom, 1859-1915

Period	Vital Rates per 1,000 Inhabitants		
	Births	Deaths	Excess of births over deaths
1859-63	31.3	21.4	9.9
1864-68	33.4	23.2	5.2
1869-73	33.3	28.0	5.3
1874-78	35.4	31.3	4.1
1878-83	42.0	27.7	14.3
1889-93	40.2	30.4	9.8
1894-98	40.7	28.0	12.7
1899-1903	42.1	27.6	14.5
1904-08	40.5	23.7	14.8
1909-13	41.7	25.3	16.4
1914-15	41.3	24.0	17.3

B. Greater Rumania, 1920-46

Year	Vital Rates per 1,000 Inhabitants (U = Urban; R = Rural)		
	Births	Deaths	Excess of births
1920	34.7	26.7	8.0
U	19.7	18.3	1.4
R	39.0	29.1	9.9
1921	39.4	23.7	15.7
U	22.7	16.3	6.4
R	44.2	25.7	18.5

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Year Vital Rates per 1,000 Inhabitants (cont.) (U = Urban; R = Rural)

	<i>Births</i>	<i>Deaths</i>	<i>Excess of births</i>
1922	38.4	23.5	14.9
U	22.5	17.5	5.0
R	42.9	25.3	17.6
1923	37.6	23.0	14.6
U	22.3	17.2	5.1
R	41.8	24.6	17.2
1924	37.9	23.3	14.6
U	22.2	16.8	5.4
R	42.1	25.0	17.1
1925	36.3	21.7	14.6
U	20.7	15.7	5.0
R	40.5	23.3	17.2
1926	35.9	22.0	13.9
U	21.6	17.5	4.1
R	39.7	23.2	16.5
1927	35.2	22.9	12.3
U	21.4	17.4	4.0
R	38.8	24.4	14.4
1928	35.9	20.2	15.7
U	22.3	17.0	5.3
R	39.4	21.1	18.3
1929	34.0	21.4	12.6
U	21.4	18.4	3.0
R	37.3	22.2	15.1
1930	35.0	19.4	15.6
U	23.6	17.7	5.9
R	37.7	19.8	17.9
1931	33.4	20.9	12.5
U	22.3	18.8	3.5
R	36.1	21.4	14.7
1932	35.9	21.7	14.2
U	22.3	18.9	3.4
R	39.1	22.3	16.8
1933	32.0	18.7	13.3
U	20.6	17.2	3.6
R	34.7	19.1	15.6
1934	32.4	20.7	11.7
U	20.9	17.9	3.0
R	35.0	21.3	13.7
1935	30.7	21.1	9.6
U	20.7	19.3	1.4
R	33.0	21.5	11.5
1936	31.5	19.8	11.7
U	21.4	19.4	2.0
R	33.6	19.9	13.9

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Year Vital Rates per 1,000 Inhabitants (cont.)

Year	Births	Deaths	Excess of births
1937	30.8	19.3	11.5
1938	29.6	19.3	10.4
1939	28.3	18.6	9.7
1940	26.5	19.1	7.4
1941	23.0	19.3	3.7
1942	21.5	19.0	2.5
1943	20.3	16.7	3.6
1944	21.7	19.6	2.1
1945	19.9	19.3	0.6
1946	23.7	18.0	5.7

SOURCES: Sabin Manuila, *Structure et évolution de la population rurale* (Bucarest, 1940), p. 45; Sabin Manuila and D. C. Georgescu, *Populația României* (Bucarest, 1938), pp. 83-84; Institutul Central de Statistică, *Comunicări statistice*, No. 18 (August 15, 1947).

TABLE V. AGRICULTURAL POPULATION, 1941

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	Total Population	Rural Population	Agricultural Population	Active in Agriculture	Passive in Agriculture
RUMANIA	13,535,757	10,238,255	9,890,423	6,504,291	3,186,132
Plain of Siret and Prut	2,037,892	1,601,094	1,572,169	1,030,235	541,934
Moldavian Carpathians	949,617	747,918	749,741	489,178	260,563
Muntenian and					
Oltenian Carpathians	2,577,913	2,190,766	2,117,182	1,379,258	737,924
Plain of the Danube	3,781,923	2,377,906	2,354,502	1,576,694	777,808
Dobrogea	519,297	365,585	331,740	210,714	121,026
Bucovina	836,215	266,619	273,545	185,685	87,860
Transylvanian Plateau	1,731,038	1,376,353	1,186,546	819,296	367,248
Western Transylvania	1,601,860	1,312,014	1,104,998	813,229	291,769

SOURCE: Roman Cresin, *Recensământul agricol al României din 1941, date provizorii*, Biblioteca Statistică, No. 10 (Bucarest, 1945), Table 20.

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- 162 The preliminary figures of the 1930 census do not give details of the various national minorities inhabiting Rumania, and the more reliable estimate will be found in Winkler's "Racial Statistics," from which the following data are extracted:—

Germans	713,564
Russians	174,293
Jews	778,094
Magyars	1,463,373
Bulgarians	351,328
Yugo-Slavs	52,570
Czechoslovaks	31,884
Ukrainians	500,484
Various	404,104
Total	4,469,694

- 634 The whole kingdom is administratively divided into 71 departments, but in the case of Transylvania, Maramureş, Crishana, and the Banat the departments created out of these provinces do not correspond exactly with the frontiers of the latter. The density of the population per sq. km. is 63 in the old kingdom, including the Dobrudja, 64 in Bessarabia, 82 in Bucovina, and 54 in Transylvania.

- 163 The birth rate for 1930 was 35 per thousand, while the death rate was 19.4, and the excess of births over deaths reached 278,722, this being the largest figure recorded since the war.

- 162 The total urban population formed 20.13 per cent, while the rural population formed 79.87 per cent. There were 172 towns, some of which must be mere villages, as at least two are shown to possess less than 1,000 inhabitants. The following towns have a population of over 20,000: Bucarest 631,288, Chişinau 117,016, Cernăuţi 111,147, Iassi 102,595, Galatz 101,148, Cluj 98,569, Timişoara 91,866, Oradea 82,355, Ploceşti 77,325, Arad 77,225, Braila 68,310, Craiova 63,063, Braşov 59,234, Constantza 58,258, Satu-Mare 49,917, Sibiu 48,013, Targul-Mureş 38,116, Buzau 36,115.

146 Largely because of its cost, the consumption of
262 sugar is very low, except among the well-to-do
in the towns. (To encourage sugar-beet growing, a
high price was set by the Government.)

[785] The diet is further impoverished by the long
religious fasts—seven weeks before Easter, six
weeks before Christmas, two shorter summer
periods, plus Wednesdays and Fridays of each
week. The diet during the fast includes practically
no food of animal origin. Children under 10 years
do not normally observe these fasts and, in fact,
usually have a better diet during these periods since
more milk, eggs and butter are available for them.

The diet, though fairly adequate in energy value,
is short of animal protein, fats and calcium;
moreover, where maize is the principal cereal
lack of vitamin B₃ may be very serious. Various
symptoms of vitamin and mineral deficiencies are
observed, and the high infant-mortality rate—the
highest in Europe—is also partly due to malnutri-
tion. One of the most serious effects of the poor
diet is the nervous disease pellagra, caused by this
deficiency of the vitamin B₃ factor. In Moldavia,
where maize is the staple food, about 5 per cent.
of the rural population suffers from pellagra every
spring. In the whole country about 3,000 deaths
occur each year from this disease (compared with
4,000 in the maize-eating southern states of U.S.A.).

The average annual pre-war food consumption of
Rumania is shown in the following table, with
comparative figures for the United Kingdom.

Average per Head Consumption

	Rumania		United Kingdom	
	Kg.	Lb.	Kg.	Lb.
Wheat and rye...	104	229	129	285
Maize	166	365	—	—
Potatoes	50	110	84	185
Sugar	5	11	43	95
Meat	17	37	63	139
Milk	70	123*	94	165*
Butter	1	2	11	24
Pig fat	4	10	5	11
Vegetable oil	1.5	3	—	—
Margarine	—	—	4	10

Calories per day 2,700 3,100*

*Pints

B. WAR-TIME CHANGES

1. Territorial Changes

728 The net effect of the territorial changes which
241 have occurred since 1939 is the loss of Northern
311 Transylvania to Hungary and of Southern Dobruja
to Bulgaria. For two seasons' crops, 1940 and 1941,
Rumania was without Bessarabia, but in the late
summer of 1941 she not only regained Bessarabia
but acquired administrative control of the Soviet
territory now styled Transnistria, and this has
made small contributions to the food supplies of
Rumania in 1942-43. Ignoring Transnistria,
however, Rumania lost 12 per cent. of her former
arable area and grain production. The Trans-
ylvanian areas ceded to Hungary, though not
rich agriculturally, probably needed only small
imports of grain to supplement their own pro-
duction, while south Dobruja, though a surplus
producing area contributed only a fraction to
Rumania's total agricultural production. The
country's potential agricultural export remains,
therefore, substantially what it was before the war.

2. Agriculture in War Years

722 Germany, at the outbreak of the war, looked to
the Danube countries, and to Rumania in particu-